expect you know, he inherited his position quite unexpectedly, and he must now adjust himself to a new life."

"I understand that," Luella agreed.

"And of course," the Marchioness went on, "we are all hoping he will marry, settle down, and produce a son. That is essential if the family is to continue as it has done for four hundred years."

Luella did not say anything and the Marchioness, as if choosing her words, said: "It is obviously extremely important for him to choose a Duchess who will fill a very important position in the way that is expected of her."

The way the Marchioness spoke told Luella only too clearly what she was pointing out. As the daughter of a mere writer, it would be a mistake for her to 'set her sights' on anyone as important as the Duke of Ingatestone. The Marchioness lowered her voice as she said: "I can tell you confidentially, Miss Hanley, that Her Majesty the Queen is anxious that my nephew should marry someone of whom she approves. In fact, she already has someone in mind."

Luella was wondering how she could say, without sounding rude, that she had no pretensions about marrying him. She realised this was what the older woman assumed she was trying to do.

It was then the Duke returned to say: "Everything is arranged, Aunt Anne, and I know you will want to have luncheon early, so that you can travel to London while it is still light."

Luella rose to her feet. "I will go and see that

Enrico's things have been packed," she said. She took the little boy, who had been quietly playing with some priceless snuff-boxes, out of the room with her. She noticed how carefully he handled them. It was, she thought, characteristic of his Italian blood that he appreciated beautiful things and was not clumsy with them.

As soon as they had left the room the Marchioness said to the Duke: "Surely, Ivor, that young woman has not been staying her unchaperoned? It would be a great mistake."

"I know that, Aunt Anne," the Duke agreed, "but unfortunately, as I have already told you, the letter announcing her arrival has been delayed. When she got here late last night I could hardly magic a chaperon out of the air!"

"It is something which must not occur again!" the Marchioness said sharply. "And this must certainly not be talked about." She paused before she added: "If the girl has an ambitious father and mother, they might accuse you of destroying her reputation, and you know what that would mean!"

"My dear Aunt Anne," the Duke said, "you are 'making a mountain out of a molehill'. As it happens, Miss Hanley's parents are both dead."

"But you must be aware," the Marchioness went on, "how poor Lord Worchester got caught in a most despicable trap merely by talking alone with a young woman in the garden." She paused a moment and then continued: "Her mother pleaded with the Prince of Wales to force him into marriage as the only reparation."